

Brampton requests help in fight against illegal land use

Mayor Groves says Caledon happy to be working with neighbour municipalities on issue

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It's not just Caledon that's dealing with a rise in illegal land use.

Recently, the City of Brampton, through its Mayor, Patrick Brown, sent a letter to Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing requesting assistance in dealing with illegal land use ? particularly when it comes to illegal truck storage yards.

?The increasing prevalence of illegal land use and land development for truck and trailer parking in our municipalities has reached an alarming and critical state,? reads Brown's letter.

The letter explains that last fall, the Mayors of Brampton, Caledon, Milton, Vaughan and Halton Hills all met to discuss how each municipality was suffering from the negative impacts of illegal land use and discuss ways to address the problem.

?While we acknowledge the urgent need for adequate and safe truck parking facilities, the rapid growth of unauthorized development poses significant challenges for our communities. The scale and nature of these unauthorized developments have severe and long-term environmental, safety and financial implications for local infrastructure, the well-being of our residents, and the quality of life in our communities,? reads the letter.

?Illegal operators also create an inequitable competitive environment for the legitimate businesses who follow the rules to fairly operate in a vital and highly competitive industry.?

In a statement to The Citizen, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said Caledon is happy to be working alongside neighbouring municipalities to fight against illegal land use.

She said modernizing the legal framework for enforcing local land use regulations will help ensure the development of safe, sustainable, and legally-compliant truck parking facilities.

Brown's letter addresses a number of changes that municipalities would like to see made to Ontario laws.

?Current provincial legislation limits the local government's ability to effectively address these issues and deter illegal land development? the perception of impunity for illegal land use has significant consequences on broad provincial efforts to plan and govern its lands in a way that supports public safety, economic productivity, housing affordability, public health, and environmental protection,? reads the letter. ?To mitigate these challenges, we urge the province to collaborate with municipalities to develop solutions that are tailored to local needs, beginning with provincial legislative amendments to empower local governments with stronger tools to enforce land use planning and permit requirements.?

Examples of requested changes include: an amendment to the Planning Act to allow municipalities to undertake remedial work on a property with illegal land use and charge the work to the property owner's tax roll; an amendment to the Municipal Act to allow for the creation of a licensing system for truck parking and storage businesses; an amendment to the Planning Act to allow a municipality to issue orders to discontinue a contravening activity; increasing fines for illegal land use; and allowing municipalities to close a business operating without a license or that is engaging in egregious illegal land uses.